

Alright, the first thing I am obligated to say is that this book is so needlessly confusing because it was published as the sixth book in the series...but it's set before book 5, the one that came out before it.

And there's absolutely nothing in this book to make that clear. So if you read them in the publishing order, like literally everyone did who was a fan of the series when this came out, you assume, okay, this is what's happening next. So what happened to ending of book 5?

But this isn't what's happening next, this has apparently all already happened before book 5.

It is just so needlessly complicated for no reason at all, and confusing in the most obnoxious way. It shouldn't take this much effort just to understand

what part of the timeline this story is set in. Why was there no simple introduction explaining that this was set before book 5??? It would have taken two sentences and NOT left dedicated readers floundering in bewilderment, wondering what the heck has happened to the kind of stories we were promised at the end of book 5.

And since I only discovered this site after I read the newest book, book 7, which is set after book 5...oh boy I guess those were promises she just never actually intended to keep at all, weren't they?

The second thing I have to say is that this title is just as meaningless and random as the rest of the titles for this series. What in the heck does "fugitive telemetry" mean? Nothing! It means nothing! It doesn't tell you anything about the story at all, and even if you've read all these book three times over, good freaking luck trying to remember what title goes

with what story, since they all seem to be chosen via a random “cool scifi word” generator rather than being chosen to do their job – describing the story they tell!

It's so irritating. You are not supposed to be picking titles for your books because you think they sound cool. It's supposed to represent your story. Readers are supposed to be able to hear the title and instantly know which story it was and what happened in it. You are supposed to be able to see the title on your bookshelf and know exactly which book you're looking at without having to take it off and start skimming.

The Murderbot Diaries' titles so far are all objectively terrible, and this one is especially bad. They mean nothing, they were apparently chosen just to sound cool and scifiy, and are completely forgettable. I've read these books each three times or more and I still can't remember what title goes with which story

except for the first one. And it's not just me either. People constantly get the titles when even when they're recommending the books! That's just objectively bad.

But anyways. Lets get to an actual review of this book.

It's fine. It would be better if it didn't contradict all of the things she'd already established in this series as far as Preservation goes, as I mentioned in my review of book 1, where we're led to believe that the Preservation team just doesn't understand how robots work and don't realize they're people.

Yeah, this book blows that completely out of the water. We see that these people interact with robots

every day. They know they're people. They even give them breaks from work just like humans get.

But they're still second class citizens who are owned like property, but for some reason, we're apparently just never going to deal with that within this universe because I guess it doesn't matter. Apparently Martha Wells thinks robots fighting for their freedom is too cliché and boring.

And that's. Uhhhhh. Bad. When you're writing a story about a robot who has escaped from slavery and is apparently just fine with all the other robots continuing to be enslaved because apparently, slaves fighting for their freedom is baaad.

Yeah that....ugh. That should have been dealt with by book 2. Not continued all the way now to book 7.

In this book, Murderbot treats all the robots and humans around it like shit constantly. It forces a random robot it's talking to to use some obscure code language that makes no sense, that has never even been hinted at existing before, purely out of spite for this robot speaking to it casually. As though Murderbot doesn't literally go around every single second thinking ~like a human~ in the most informal and vulgar ways possible, to the point that so many readers insist Murderbot must actually be human, because it sounds exactly like one!

So what in the heck is with this bullcrap? Murderbot finds it offensive that another robot is "treating it like a human".....by saying hi. As casually as it would talk to literally anyone else. The exact same casual way Murderbot thinks and talks.

It's so absurd and comes out of nowhere, and instead of doing anything with the idea that people keep pretending Murderbot is human (which...literally no one ever does? Ever??? The whole problem of it being on Preservation is that people are treating it like a dangerous weapon. But we're supposed to just pretend that, actually, people here keep pretending it's human?????), it just makes Murderbot explicitly a horrible person that no one should ever want to hang around.

There is no reason for Murderbot to be so spiteful and force this random robot who was just saying hi to use some obscure code language to ~reaffirm that its a robot who doesn't care about stupid things like human emotion~. It's absurd. Blatantly, patently absurd. It contradicts every single second of anything written in this series, and is apparently just there because Martha Wells REALLY wanted to show off this ridiculous code language she'd come up with.

And it is ridiculous and obnoxious to read. It doesn't make any sense in this novel, from any perspective, and is just painful to try to parse, even if you ignore how it's literally just making Murderbot into an absolute asshole whose not even enjoyable to read about.

For a series that wants to be anticapitalist, it's pretty ridiculous to then have Murderbot doing the copaganda of breaking into people's hotel rooms to search their things and it's totally fine because the protagonist is always right. Gotta say. Pretty contradictory to the "anticapitalism" rocks for Murderbot to constantly be violating people's privacy and it's totally fine because Murderbot is always right and it's ~totally~ not breaking and entering if someone else unlocks the door for you.

And like with the rest of this series, Martha Wells still continues to refuse to have anyone, including the

neopronoun-using protagonist, tell anyone or ask anyone their pronouns.

Murderbot doesn't even include its pronouns in its government-enforced feed bio that it gets in this story. So there goes everyone's excuse that "people just have their pronouns in their feed bio". No, they literally don't. They literally list their sex, or lack thereof, and everyone just assumes pronouns from there, and never gets them wrong, because Martha Wells loves biological essentialism and wants the points she'll get for having ~a nonbinary protagonist who uses neopronouns~ without ever actually even doing the bare minimum in regards to that.

Like having Murderbot literally tell anyone its pronouns even once. She wants to just keep doing biological essentialism, and enforce the idea that the Gender Trinary™ is progressive. It's not. You cannot

look at anyone and tell what pronouns they use unless they're literally wearing a pronoun pin.

This is the sixth book in a series with a nonbinary protagonist who uses neopronouns, but not once does the word "pronoun" even get said ONCE. I know. I checked. Painstakingly.

The word "pronouns" does not exist in this series until book 7, when it's mentioned for no other purpose except to explicitly crap on the idea of asking people for their pronouns.

Because Martha Wells wants the free advertising that young nonbinary people who don't know any better will give her just because Murderbot is a literal sexless robot, without actually having to put in any of the bare minimum effort to make this exorsexist

stereotype anything more than just another hollow stereotype.

“Of course you’re aroace and nonbinary, you’re a robot who doesn’t have genitals, how can you have a gender if you don’t have a sex?” wasn’t a progressive idea in the 80s, and its still not a progressive idea here in the 20s.

There are so many opportunities in this book where she could have introduced human characters who are nonbinary and use it/its pronouns, who actually matter to the plot and don’t disappear immediately, never to be seen again. But no. That would require actually dismantling biological essentialism and exorsexism, and she won’t do that.

So instead we're just supposed to be happy with another lifeless stereotype of the nonbinary robot, whose pronouns everyone magically knows despite it literally never even hinting at them, because Martha Wells doesn't actually want to represent nonbinary and trans people with this series, she just wants to write another biologically essentialist story and profit off the free advertising nonbinary kids will do for her.

It's queerbaiting, plain and simple. Do none of the real work, get all of the praise anyways.

These books aren't representation for nonbinary people, it's just another exorsexist stereotype, with countless opportunities to make it more than that, but Martha Wells just keeps refusing to take those opportunities. It would be so easy to introduce important, recurring nonbinary human characters who use it/its or are aroace. It would be so easy to reveal that Murderbot was actually assigned a

different gender when it was constructed, and changed its assigned pronouns to it/its when it hacked its governor module.

But that would require Martha Wells actually caring about nonbinary people, and that's apparently just never going to happen. Not at this rate.

And as for the plot of this book, it'd be almost fine, without all the other problems, except the reveal at the end is confusing and not explained very well.

There's really not much going for this book. It's not nearly as interesting or fun as the others, and has a whole lot of obnoxious stuff. It shouldn't take more than two books to get past the "waaah but I don't WANT to write about robot rebellion against slavery!!!!" bullcrap. Why are we supposed to believe this is a series about fighting for equality when robots are explicitly enslaved, but at the same time we're

only supposed to give a crap when it's either the protagonist, or humans being hurt?

ugh and I haven't even brought up the absurd levels of ableism in this book. Martha Wells has decided to not just demonize drug addicts, but disabled people who can't feel pain. UGH. We're told that disabled slaved who have been drugged against their will are "less a person than a hauler bot".

Even though:

A)We're supposed to think that robots are literally people!

B) WHAT THE ABSOLUTE CRAP.

Does Martha Wells think disabled people who can't feel pain only exist in fiction? I am so over the absolutely disgustingly evil trope of "people who can't feel pain are scary and unstoppable murder machines".

No, people who can't feel pain are not dangerous to you! A six year old who gives herself third degree burns on a hot stove because she can't feel the pain of the metal burning her is not some scary fantastical monster for every bigoted author to throw under the bus and portray as horrifying!

Why in the crap are we supposed to think this is a series about robots being people too, if we then get told at every turn that actually, the robots aren't people, and disabled humans are even less people than they are!

Martha Wells keeps insisting upon separating disabled humans (“augmented humans”, aka cybrog, aka people with prosthetics of literally any kind) from “real humans”, and this book takes it a million miles further by actively stating, explicitly, that disabled, drug-addicted humans are not people and are disposable and worthless and literally should just be put down, not even with the kindness of animals.

For the ableism alone this book gets dropped to 1 star. I would have given it 2 if it had just been all the other crap, but this is just freaking inexcusable for someone to write in 2021 that pretends to be progressive.

Disabled people, including those addicted to drugs, deserve better. Disabled people are PEOPLE, and it is absolutely not okay to say that we are inhuman

monsters who are so scary we should just be killed, and are “less of a person than a hauler bot” EVEN THOUGH WE’RE SUPPOSED TO THINK THESE ROBOTS ARE PEOPLE.

Martha Wells is so ableist in this book she can’t even stop herself from doing a fantasy ableism along with the real world ableism. People deserve rights, unless they’re physically disabled. Unless they’re robots who can’t talk with words. Unless they’re enslaved people who aren’t human and aren’t the protagonist.

Absolutely despicable in a series that we’re supposed to think is progressive and all for equal rights.